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ABSTRACT

The global education movement suggests that exposing students to information about different cultures reduces their provincial attitudes and facilitates world-mindedness. To test this possibility, 184 freshmen at the City College of the City University of New York, some enrolled in a World Civilization course and some not, answered a questionnaire in pre-test and post-test sessions. The questionnaire assessed students' interests, self-perceived knowledge, and actual knowledge of different cultures around the world. Increased interest toward different cultures was the measure of reduced provincialism. The findings generally indicated that the World Civilization course did not produce changes on these variables. (Author)

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Does The City College New World Civilization Course Reduce Provincialism?

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Mentor: Dr. William Crain

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts of the College of Liberal Arts and Science of The City College of the City University of New York.

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Abstract

The global education movement suggests that exposing students to information about different cultures reduces their provincial attitudes and facilitates world-mindedness. To test this possibility, one hundred and eighty four freshmen at the City College of New York, some enrolled in a World Civilization course and some not, answered a questionnaire in pre-test and post-test sessions. The questionnaire assessed students' interests, self-perceived knowledge, and actual knowledge of different cultures around the world. Increased interest toward different cultures was the measure of reduced provincialism. The findings generally indicated that the World Civilization course did not produce changes on these variables.

Does The City College New World Civilization Course Reduce Provincialism?

In today's world, when individuals move beyond their daily experiences they are likely to encounter people who speak in a different language, who have different beliefs and customs, and who have a different worldview. The individual's understanding of such diversity ought to be one of the main goals of any educational institution which aspires to help prepare students for life in a world characterized by interdependence.

In the past two decades, the global education movement has generated a body of literature which demonstrates a need for global education (Kniep, 1986). The justification for global education is found in the fact that the world is constantly changing and that U.S. students lack knowledge about their world. Programs in global education attempt to focus on the interdependent nature of our world so that students can acquire the necessary skills and motivation to participate effectively and responsibly in the world.

Central to the global education movement is the historical perspective. Kniep (1986) contends that what are called "world histories" in schools are often histories of Western civilization and the spread

of Western influence to separate regions of the world. He also claims that little attention is given to relations among nations and that a global perspective is not developed.

Without the understanding that exchange and contact has been continuous among civilizations for many centuries, misconceptions about other cultures develop and lead to provincial and ethnocentric attitudes. Diminishing inaccurate preconceptions about different cultures and promoting cross-cultural understanding in students is recognized by the global education movement as a way to broaden students' perceptions of other cultures (Conley, 1985; Cole, 1984; Wilson, 1982).

According to Harding et al. (1969), "...persons with considerable information about a specific group tend to have more favorable attitudes toward that group." Hayes and Concklin (1953) and Kagan (1952) found that a "vicarious experience" approach in which subjects read and listened to the experiences of minority group members was most effective in changing ethnic attitudes.

According to Banks (1973), Americans still believe that ethnic groups will eventually abandon their unique cultural identities and traditions and adopt those of White Anglo-Saxon Protestants. This implies

that Americans envision a domination of Anglo-Saxon culture rather than a true cultural synthesis. Furthermore, ethnic groups are an integral part of American society and these groups are relatively uninformed about one another. For example, a school district populated mostly by Puerto Ricans is likely to have a program in Puerto Rican studies. However, students in such schools usually don't learn about other ethnic groups; they don't gain an understanding about the similarities among ethnic groups and about the interactions and tensions among these groups.

Most importantly, what students might learn under these conditions is fragmented and parochial in scope so that they cannot fully grasp the unique and complex histories and cultural identities of the people of other groups. Consequently, Banks (1973) suggests that every student in America, regardless of his ethnic background, needs ethnic studies.

While the goal of teaching students to be world-minded individuals is essential, it is important to recognize that students will not learn everything which the teacher attempts to communicate. Students are generally selective in retaining information, and while they may learn and retain material long enough to pass an exam, this does not indicate that all of the material

is of equal significance for them. One factor which is instrumental in determining the importance of course material for any one student is the degree of interest the student has in the content of the material (Nist, 1983).

In the Encyclopedia of Psychology (1946) interests are defined as "...factors within an individual which attract him to or repel him from various objects, persons, and activities within his environment." and educational interest is defined more specifically as "...the expressed preference among possible activities as possibly satisfying educational needs." Thorndike (1935) asserts that individuals may acquire their interests and attitudes by imitating their families or groups and that deliberate training can produce changes in such interests and attitudes.

Research has provided evidence that there is a positive relationship between interest and educational achievement. For example, Hutchinson (1978) conducted a study which was developed to determine whether lessons designed to emphasize expressed personal interest would improve functionally illeterate adults' interpretation of word meanings and "silent reading information recall skills". Pre-test and post-test assessments showed that the experimental group, who had read materials of

specific interest, made significantly larger gains. This and other similar studies (Nist, 1983; Laeazar, 1978; Rigg and Taylor, 1978) imply that motivation for learning and actual learning increase when the student is interested in the material.

The relationship between interest and ethnocentrism has been studied by Aboud (1977). The findings indicate that interest impels children to actively seek out ethnic information in pictures, especially in characters considered very similar and very different from themselves. Aboud (1977) suggests that ethnic information seeking is related to a desire to evaluate one's own ethnic group affiliation which leads to an interest in comparing one's own ethnic group with similar and different groups.

Based on such research evidence, it is plausible that a student who is knowledgable about various cultures is likely to show more interest in these cultures and to have more tolerant and less provincial attitudes toward these cultures than a student whose knowledge is limited. Furthermore, it is also conceivable that the student who shows higher interest is likely to be less provincial in his attitudes.

In this study an attempt is made to determine the effectiveness of the new World Civilization 101 course

of The City College in reducing provincial attitudes of students toward different cultures. The course World Civilization 101 was added to the core requirements of undergraduates as part of the new common core which emphasizes global education. This course is mandatory for all students. The College hopes that the course will expose students to a variety of old and new cultures around the world, significantly widening their interests and horizons. In other words, the course will reduce provincialism and make students more broad-minded citizens.

In this study provincialism is assessed in terms of levels of interest in different cultures, where an increase in interest is interpreted as a reduction in provincial attitudes. Furthermore, the study attempts to determine if the course increases self-perceived knowledge and actual knowledge of diverse cultures.

Specifically, the hypothesis is that the World Civilization 101 course will reduce provincial attitudes toward different cultures, and students who take the course will show an increased interest score on the post-test compared to those students who don't take the course. Furthermore, students who take the course will show increased self-perceived knowledge and actual knowledge scores on the

post-test compared to those students who don't take the course. In addition, students who are enrolled in bridge sections of the course (bridge courses are designed for students enrolled in remedial English classes and contain half the content of the material covered in regular courses) will also show increased scores on the post-test.

Method

Participants: Two hundred and eighty eight students from the entering freshmen class of Fall 1987 at the City College of New York responded to the survey on the pre-test. One hundred and four students were dropped from the study because they failed to respond to the survey on the post-test. The remaining 184 students served as participants. Table A indicates the number of students dropped from each group.

Table A
Numbers Dropping Out

	Experimental Condition		Control Condition	
	Regular	Bridge	Regular	Bridge
Dropouts	56	11	19	18
Remaining Sample	99	30	13	42

Of those in the control bridge group, 20 were enrolled in World Humanities 101 and 22 were enrolled in Psychology 102.

One hundred and one participants were male and 83

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were female, and the mean age was 18.98 years (S= 2.33 years). Forty five and sixty five hundredths percent of the participants were American-born and 45.11% spoke only English.

Participants enrolled in regular sections were also enrolled in non-remedial English courses (English 110 or higher). Participants enrolled in bridge sections were also enrolled in remedial English courses (English 1 or 2). Bridge sections of courses are taught in two semesters and one semester of the course includes one-half of the content of the material covered in one semester in regular sections. The 13 participants in the control group for the regular sections were chosen from a random list of entering freshmen and arrangements for them to participate in the study were made on the telephone. All of the participants were told that their participation in the study was required.

Questionnaire: A questionnaire was prepared in consultation with the faculty teaching the course World Civilization 101. The questionnaire had three parts: 1) Interest Survey, 2) Perceptions of World Knowledge, and 3) Information. Parts one and three of the questionnaire were prepared with the help of the faculty teaching the course. The items on part two were taken from the instrument for "Evaluating Global Education"

prepared by Global Perspectives in Education Inc. (1986-1987). The questionnaire asked participants' interests in culturally diverse phenomena, the degree of knowledge they felt they had acquired about different cultures of the world, and assessed the degree of their actual knowledge about different cultures, (The complete questionnaire and scoring is in Appendix 1).

Design: This study was carried out by a pre-test/post-test design. The three dependent variables, interest, self-perceived knowledge, and information were tested under two course-types, regular and bridge in experimental and control conditions. A 2x2x2 repeated measures multiple analyses of variance were performed on the data.

Procedure: Testing occurred in two sessions, pre-test, on the first week of the semester and post-test, on the last week of the semester. All of the participants, except the control group for the regular sections, were tested in their classrooms. The control group for the regular sections was tested when all of the participants were available at a common time. If the students in this group failed to meet the arrangements made on the telephone, a copy of the questionnaire was mailed to their homes. The experimenter introduced the study to the participants in

the following way:

> "Hello, my name is --- --- and I'm a graduate student here at C.C.N.Y.. This semester, the college is conducting a survey on students' interests. The questionnaire you are about to receive will ask you about your interests in various things. The purpose of this survey is to help the college design new courses which will best meet the interests of the students. Please answer all four pages of the questionnaire and please make sure to indicate the last four digits of your ID number on the first page. Also, please remember that this is not a test. Thank you for participating in this survey."

In the post-test, if participants commented that they had already answered this survey, they were told:

> "Yes, you answered this survey once before, but, please answer it again."

Because questioning people on their opinions toward different cultural and ethnic groups introduces various ethical issues into this study, anonymity of the participants was assured by asking only for the last four digits of their ID numbers. This was necessary in order to match participants on pre and post measures.

After the introduction, the questionnaires were passed out to the participants and they were collected back as each participant indicated having completed the work. In most instances, the testing sessions lasted approximately 10 minutes. The teachers did not interfere with the testing procedure. The testing procedure was identical in pre and post sessions. In view of the possibility that the study may be replicated

in the near future, the participants were not debriefed.

Results

Multiple analysis of variance - condition (experimental vs. control) x course-type (regular vs. bridge) x pre-test/post-test - were performed on interest scores, self-perceived knowledge scores, and information scores. Five main effects reached statistical significance and no interactions were obtained. A significant condition by pre/post interaction was necessary for confirmation of the experimental hypothesis. This interaction was not significant for any one of the dependent variables; the main hypothesis of the study was not confirmed.

Interest Scores: The multiple analysis of variance for interest scores indicates significant differences between the experimental and control conditions $F(1,180) = 11.72$, $p < .001$ and in pre-test/post-test measures $F(1,180) = 6.06$, $p < .01$ (See Table 1 for a composite of mean scores). However, as seen in Table 2, the condition by pre/post interaction did not reach statistical significance $F(1,180) = 2.00$, $p < .15$.

Table 1
Mean Scores for Interest, Self Perceived Knowledge, and Information

		Experimental Condition		Control Condition	
		Regular	Bridge	Regular	Bridge
Interest	Pre	26.24	25.77	19.23	19.21
	Post	26.64	26.83	21.62	22.24
SelfPer. Know.	Pre	11.66	11.10	12.08	10.76
	Post	13.39	13.00	13.69	10.52
Info.	Pre	4.07	1.87	4.00	2.21
	Post	5.11	3.07	4.31	2.62

Table 2
Summary of Analysis of Interest Scores

Source of Variation	SS	DF	MS	F
Between Cells	28627.92	180	159.04	
Constant	122289.90	1	122289.90	768.91
Condition (Cond)	1863.55	1	1863.55	11.72*
Course-type (Cotyp)	.37	1	.37	.00
Cond by cotyp	2.72	1	2.72	.02
Within Cells	4856.78	180	26.98	
Prepost	163.64	1	163.64	6.06**
Cond by Prepost	54.05	1	54.05	2.00
Cotyp by Prepost	5.97	1	5.97	.22
Cond by Cotyp by Prepost	.00	1	.00	.00

* $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$

Furthermore, Table 3 indicates that the overall significant difference between the conditions and in pre-test/post-test measures is somewhat greater in the control groups than in the experimental groups.

Table 3
Pre-test/Post-test Mean Interest Difference Scores

	Experimental	Control
Regular	+.40	+2.39
Bridge	+1.06	+3.03

Self-Perceived Knowledge Scores: The multiple analysis of variance for self-perceived knowledge scores indicates significant differences between the pre-test/post-test measures F (1,180)= 9.25, p < .003. (See Table 1). However, as seen in Table 4, the condition by pre/post interaction did not reach statistical significance F (1,180)= 1.88, p < .17.

Table 4
Summary of Analysis of Self-Perceived Knowledge Scores

Source of Variation	SS	DF	MS	F
Between Cells	5439.16	180	30.22	
Constant	32099.90	1	32099.90	1062.29
Condition (Cond)	15.23	1	15.23	.50
Course-type (Cotyp)	102.41	1	102.41	3.39
Cond by Cotyp	43.29	1	43.29	1.43
Within Cells	1697.28	180	9.43	
Prepost	87.21	1	87.21	9.25*
Cond by Prepost	17.72	1	17.72	1.88
Cotyp by Prepost	9.92	1	9.92	1.05
Cond by Cotyp by Prepost	14.10	1	14.10	1.50

* p < .003

Table 5
Pre-test/Post-test Mean Self-Perceived Knowledge Difference Scores

	Experimental	Control
Regular	+1.73	+1.61
Bridge	+1.90	-.24

Information Scores: The multiple analysis of variance for information scores indicates significant differences between the regular and bridge course-types F (1,180)= 35.61, p < .001 and in pre-test/post-test measures F (1,180)= 11.44, p < .001 (See Table 1). As

seen in Table 6, the condition by pre/post interaction approached significance $F(1,180)= 3.06$, $p < .08$. This indicates that taking the World Civilization course did provide students with information about different cultures to some degree.

Table 6
Summary of Analysis of Information Scores

Source of Variation	SS	DF	MS	F
Between Cells	1045.60	180	5.81	
Constant	2576.52	1	2576.52	443.55
Condition (Cond)	3.29	1	3.29	.57
Course-type (Cotyp)	206.85	1	206.85	35.61*
Cond by Cotyp	2.08	1	2.08	.36
Within Cells	475.76	180	2.64	
Prepost	30.24	1	30.24	11.44*
Cond by Prepost	8.10	1	8.10	3.06**
Cotyp by Prepost	.23	1	.23	.09
Cond by Cotyp by Prepost	.01	1	.01	.01

* $p < .001$ ** $p < .08$

Table 7 indicates, unexpectedly, that the increase in information scores is somewhat greater in the bridge courses than in the regular courses.

Table 7
Pre-test/Post-test Mean Information Difference Scores

	Experimental	Control
Regular	+1.04	+.31
Bridge	+1.20	+.41

Discussion

The present study failed to support the idea that exposing students to information about different

cultures reduces their provincial attitudes.

It was assumed that taking the World Civilization 101 course would reduce students' provincial attitudes by exposing them to information about various cultures and ethnic groups around the world. The results indicate that World Civilization 101 did not produce changes in students' attitudes.

The multiple analysis of variance main effects indicate that in general, all students, regardless of the courses in which they were enrolled, showed a significant increase in interest, self-perceived knowledge, and actual knowledge on the post-test. Perhaps, the multi-ethnic campus environment of City College may be a positive influence on students' interests in other ethnic groups. There is research evidence (Murphy and Likert, 1938) which indicates that the general student population of City College has a tradition of being more tolerant of ethnic diversity compared to college populations around the country. The City College student population has changed dramatically since the instigation of open admissions in 1970 and has become multi-ethnic. Students from different ethnic backgrounds often form friendships and interact with one another regularly. Consequently, it can be tentatively suggested that the

campus environment of City College contributed to students' experience with cultural diversity. Thus, all students showed increased scores on the post-test.

The information scores indicated that the condition by pre-post interaction approached significance in the direction of higher scores in the experimental groups. It seems that World Civilization 101 may be effective in broadening students' knowledge about different cultures. Perhaps actual knowledge, rather than interests, will prove to be the key variable in future research.

The World Civilization 101 course may have failed to change students' provincial attitudes because it was poorly constructed. The volume of the material covered in the regular sections may have been too extensive and enough time was not devoted to any particular culture or group to generate interest. Informal conversations with students in these classes give support to this possibility. In general, students' major complaint was the extent of the material they were responsible for learning in a very short time-period. Some students commented that all they could do was memorize. Evidently, students were truly overwhelmed and burdened and they did not enjoy the course. This was most likely a major determining factor in the negative outcome of the course. Students may benefit more from the course

if the amount of material covered is decreased to a manageable level.

Any conclusions from this study must be regarded tentatively because it contained several limitations. First, although the main focus of the study was on students' provincial attitudes toward cultures other than their own, it was not possible to ask direct questions about their opinions of different cultures and ethnic groups. This restriction applied because the College did not deem it justifiable to probe students' private attitudes and opinions. Secondly, the control groups were too small and most likely not representative of the population of freshmen not enrolled in World Civilization 101.

Moreover, there are many possible ways of changing provincial attitudes. Formal instruction in classrooms is only one example. There is research evidence Wilson, (1982) which suggests that active participation, rather than passive classroom learning, is more effective in producing cross-cultural understanding. Students may need to be actively involved with people from different cultures and experience interpersonal communication and commitment with persons and relationships, in order to overcome the bounds of provincialism and become world-minded individuals.

Nevertheless, the study did provide valuable information about possible changes in the syllabus of World Civilization 101 in order to make the course more beneficial for the students. If the course is modified as suggested by the present findings, a similar study in the future may yield more useful conclusions.

Appendix 1

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

As we develop new courses, we need information on students interests, attitudes, and feelings about their education.

We would like you to give your true responses to the items below. All your answers will be kept strictly confidential, and your instructors will not see your responses.

Background Information

I.D. # (last 4 digits) ---------- Sex ---M ---F

Age ------

In what country were you born? ----------

What languages, other than English, do you speak fluently? ----------

---

Interest Survey

How interested are you in learning more about the following topics?

	Very Interested	Pretty Interested	Slightly Interested	Not Interested *
Religions other than your own	-----	-----	-----	-----
Ancient Egyptians	-----	-----	-----	-----
Roman Law	-----	-----	-----	-----
The Mayans	-----	-----	-----	-----

* Scoring: 4 points - "Very Interested", 3 points - "Pretty Interested", and so forth.

Interest Survey Continued

	Very Interested	Pretty Interested	Slightly Interested	Not Interested
Kingdoms & nations of West Africa	-----	-----	-----	-----
Confucianism	-----	-----	-----	-----
Cultures different from your own	-----	-----	-----	-----
Mongol Tribes	-----	-----	-----	-----
Political Institutions in the Middle Ages	-----	-----	-----	-----
Orthodox Judaism	-----	-----	-----	-----
Ancient Greek philosophy	-----	-----	-----	-----
Islam	-----	-----	-----	-----
Renaissance art	-----	-----	-----	-----
Life patterns of early humans	-----	-----	-----	-----
Influences of geography & economic social development	-----	-----	-----	-----
Ancient societies in South America	-----	-----	-----	-----
Buddhism	-----	-----	-----	-----

Perceptions of World Knowledge

In your education so far, both formal and informal, how much do you think you have learned about the histories and geographies of the following areas of the world?

	A Great Deal	Some	A Little	Practically Nothing
The United States	-----	-----	-----	-----
Western Europe	-----	-----	-----	-----
The Soviet Union & Eastern Europe	-----	-----	-----	-----
Subsaharan Africa	-----	-----	-----	-----
China & Japan	-----	-----	-----	-----
South & Southeast Asia (from Pakistan & India to Indonesia & the Phillipines)	-----	-----	-----	-----
Latin America & Carribean Countries	-----	-----	-----	-----

Information

We would like you to answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Please give all the information you think is necessary.

1. Where have the earliest human fossils been found?

2. On what continent is the Nile?

3. Where did Buddhism begin?

4. What is the name of a great religion which originated in China?

5. What is the Torah?

6. Who wrote The Republic and a dialogue on the death of Socrates?

7. What is meant by the term "polygamy"?

8. Can you name a major European writer during the Middle Ages?

9. Where did the Mayan culture develop?

10. Where is the Sudan?

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